

Appendix A: The Massachusetts Watershed Initiative¹

The Massachusetts Watershed Initiative is a broad partnership of state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, businesses, municipal officials and individuals. Begun in 1993 by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the MWI is an innovative, results-oriented program that protects and restores natural resources and ecosystems on a watershed basis by:

- Finding the sources of pollution and taking cooperative action to clean them up;
- Teaching and helping groups and communities to protect and restore their local waters;
- Expanding communication among local, private and public partners so everyone works together to solve water resource problems;
- Improving coordination among government agencies; and,
- Directing resources to critical needs so our limited dollars go further to resolving the most important problems.

Watershed teams, made up of representatives of governmental agencies and community partners (non-profit organizations, municipal boards, and businesses), coordinate the watershed protection efforts in each of the 27 major watersheds of Massachusetts. Since 1998, each team has had a full-time leader employed by EOE.

The Watershed Teams focus on an innovative five-year management process that is designed to collect and share resources and information, target existing and potential impacts to natural resources, assess impacts to natural resources, and develop and implement activities to protect and improve the Commonwealth's land and water resources. The five-year process is sequenced such that each year builds on the work of the previous year. Annual Work Plans are developed with active team involvement and serve as a guide for coordinating Watershed Team efforts. The Annual Work Plans are the building blocks of the more comprehensive Five Year Watershed Action Plan. Action Plans influence which projects receive state and federal grants and loans, regulatory decision-making, and educational/technical assistance programs to solve the most important environmental problems affecting communities.

The primary goals of the Watershed Initiative are to:

- Improve water quality;
- Restore natural flows to rivers;
- Protect and restore habitats;
- Improve public access and balanced resource use;
- Improve local capacity to protect water resources; and,

¹ This description is taken from EOE, Massachusetts Watershed Initiative: 5-Year Watershed Action Plan Guidance, October 2002.

- Promote shared responsibility for watershed protection and management.

Each Watershed Team incorporates these broad goals into its own set of watershed-level goals, the "Five Watershed Priorities."